

PROPOSED REMARKS  
BY  
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BEFORE THE  
COMMENCEMENT EXERCISES AT ROCKHURST COLLEGE  
INDEPENDENCE, MISSOURI  
MAY 15, 1988

THANK YOU VERY MUCH. I AM PLEASED TO BE BACK HOME IN MISSOURI, AND I AM DEEPLY GRATIFIED THAT YOU HAVE CHOSEN TO MAKE ME AN HONORARY ALUMNUS OF ROCKHURST COLLEGE. THOSE OF YOU GRADUATING FROM ROCKHURST TODAY HAVE HAD THE OPPORTUNITY TO SHARE EXPERIENCES AT A SMALLER COLLEGE, TO LEARN FROM AND BE CHALLENGED BY GIFTED FACULTY MEMBERS, AND TO MAKE FRIENDS THAT WILL LAST A LIFETIME WHEREVER YOU WILL GO.

I GRADUATED FROM A SMALL COLLEGE IN MASSACHUSETTS YEARS AGO, AND THE SPEAKER, I RECALL, WAS GENERAL GEORGE C. MARSHALL. I HAVE TO CONFESS TO YOU THAT I CAN'T REMEMBER A WORD HE SAID. MY REMARKS OF APPRECIATION TODAY, SHORT AS I PROMISE THEY WILL BE, MAY NOT RING LOUD OR LONG IN YOUR EARS, BUT AT LEAST I WILL HAVE THE PLEASURE OF VISITING WITH YOU.

I HAVE FOUND THAT WHATEVER YOUR ROLE IN LIFE, AND VIRTUALLY ALL AVENUES ARE NOW OPEN TO YOU, THE KEY IS PARTICIPATION -- BEING PART OF A SOLUTION, WHETHER AT THE SCHOOL BOARD LEVEL, OR THE CITY, COUNTY, STATE, OR NATIONAL LEVEL. IT IS THE WILLINGNESS AND ENTHUSIASM TO SERVE THAT BRINGS FORTH THE BEST WITHIN US.

I HAVE SPENT MUCH OF MY ADULT LIFE IN PUBLIC SERVICE, THOUGH I STILL LIKE TO THINK OF MYSELF AS A PRIVATE CITIZEN ON LOAN. I HAVE FOUND THAT IT REALLY DOES NOT MATTER WHETHER YOU ARE ASKED TO SERVE IN GOVERNMENT AT THE NATIONAL LEVEL. I NEVER EXPECTED TO BE DOING THAT, AND I WAS HAPPY DOING THE THINGS I WAS DOING. COMMUNITY IS THE IMPORTANT THING -- TO PARTICIPATE IN YOUR COMMUNITY. PUBLIC SERVICE AT THE NATIONAL LEVEL IS NOTHING MORE THAN AN EXTENSION OF THE MANY KINDS OF COMMUNITY SERVICE THAT FORM THE FABRIC OF NEIGHBORHOODS, CITIES, AND COUNTIES THROUGHOUT THIS COUNTRY.

SOME YEARS AGO, MY SON AND I WERE ENGAGED IN EXPLORING A SERIES OF MINING CLAIMS IN COLORADO. OUR ESCORTS WERE MEMBERS OF THE ROCKY

MOUNTAIN BIOLOGICAL SOCIETY, WHO WERE CONDUCTING ALPINE TESTS TO HELP OUR SPACE SCIENTISTS. BECAUSE IT WAS INACCESSIBLE ANY OTHER WAY, WE WENT BY HORSEBACK. IT REALLY WAS A MAGNIFICENT SCENE. I LOOKED OUT AT THE MOUNTAIN SCENES AND DOWN AT THE RAVINES AND WAS TREMENDOUSLY IMPRESSED. BUT ALL THE TIME I WAS LOOKING OUT AT THESE VISTAS, MY ESCORTS FROM THE ROCKY MOUNTAIN BIOLOGICAL SOCIETY WERE LOOKING DOWN AND POINTING OUT THE LITTLE INDIAN PAINTBRUSH FLOWERS, THE LITTLE ALPINE GROUSE AND THE SMALL-WINGED GRASSHOPPER THAT WERE INDIGENOUS TO THAT HIGH ALTITUDE AND WHICH TO THEM WERE JUST AS WONDERFUL AND JUST AS IMPORTANT AS ALL THOSE MOUNTAIN PEAKS AND VALLEYS WERE TO ME.

I THINK THE POINT IS THIS, AND IT CAME THROUGH TO ME THEN AND HAS MANY TIMES SINCE, THAT WHETHER YOU WOULD FOCUS UPON THE MOUNTAIN OR EXPLORE THE MICRO-WONDERS OF THE EARTH, THE IMPORTANT THING IS NOT WHERE WE FOCUS BUT HOW AND THE COMMITMENT THAT WE BRING TO IT.

OLIVER WENDELL HOLMES, WHO LOVED THIS COUNTRY PASSIONATELY AND SERVED AS ONE OF ITS GREATEST JUSTICES, SUMMED IT UP THIS WAY:

"WHETHER A MAN ACCEPTS FROM FORTUNE HER SPADE AND WILL LOOK DOWNWARD AND DIG, OR FROM ASPIRATION HER AXE AND CORD, AND WILL SCALE THE ICE, THE ONE AND ONLY SUCCESS WHICH IS HIS TO COMMAND IS TO BRING TO HIS WORK A MIGHTY HEART." IT IS IN PUTTING YOUR EFFORT WHERE YOUR HEART IS THAT YOU CAN MAKE THE GREATEST CONTRIBUTION.

I HOPE THAT YOUR ENTHUSIASM, YOUR ABILITY, YOUR INTELLIGENCE, AND YOUR DEDICATION WILL BE SHARED, AT LEAST IN PART, WITH YOUR FELLOW CITIZENS WHO SEEK TO IMPROVE THE QUALITY OF LIFE IN THE COMMUNITIES IN WHICH YOU CHOOSE TO LIVE.